

**South Precinct Email Community Newsletter**  
**February 4, 2009**



Dear Community Friends;

**Burglary Trend**

Recently, we've noted a number of burglaries where the burglars used pry bars to gain entry into residences. Pry bars have been used to pry open storm doors and blunt force was used to force open the exterior door. We've seen instances where pry bars have been used against the exterior door itself. The use of a pry bar damages the door and doorjamb, makes entry relatively easy and is difficult to defend against.

**What you can do:**

- Make sure your current lock installation includes a steel security plate and extended (3"-4") screws in the strike plates that sink in to the framing around the door. Place some of these longer screws in the door hinges as well. After-market kits to upgrade your exterior locks are available at your local hardware store. For French doors, ensure they have floor and ceiling bolts that extend at least one inch into the floor and the upper doorframe, respectively.
- Crime Prevention Coordinators provide free home security assessments. We walk around the home with you, point out where you may have security vulnerabilities and make recommendations for improvement. Just call to schedule a date and time for one of us to come over. We also provide this service for businesses.
- If considering an alarm system, you may want to consider burglar alarms that have contact sensors on every exterior door and a very loud audible siren that can be heard by neighbors. This may not stop the burglar from causing damage, but more often than not the blaring siren will cause the burglar to flee. Neighbors tend to notice an alarm going off and will hopefully take a look to see what's going on. Alert neighbors who call in the alarm to 911 - and give us descriptions of the people they see fleeing from the alarm - help police catch burglars.
- We also want to stress vigilance. Be observant and pay attention to what's happening in your neighborhood and who's out and about in your area. For those of you who work from home or are home during daylight hours, take a look around every now and then and see what's happening on your block. And, if you just happen to see a couple of guys walking down the street with a crow bar, you *might* want to call 911.

**Gangs and Youth Violence**

There is increasing concern about the level of gang activity and youth violence in our community. Many of us have read accounts of young men in our community - mostly teens - that have been killed by gun violence. The sad truth is that many of these victims were killed by other young men. Even more unfortunate is that many of the victims and perpetrators were either gang involved, gang affiliated, or they emulated the gang lifestyle.

I can speak from personal experience as a parent that there are warning signs that a child is associating with the wrong crowd. I saw changes in my teenage stepson's behavior (staying out late, sagging his pants, getting stopped by police because one of his cohorts had threatened someone with a knife, getting shot at - twice). As much as I wanted to believe that it couldn't happen in my family (not with what I do for a living), I couldn't deny that there was an issue and as parents we needed to act.

So, as a parent and as a caring adult, I have to ask young people, just as I asked my stepson, "If the people you are hanging around with are getting you shot at or detained by police, don't you think you ought to hang out with some different friends?" (By the way, to paraphrase The Who, "The Kid is Alright.")

Recent articles in the daily papers have highlighted not only the problem, but also groups working on solutions. See the February 2<sup>nd</sup> Seattle Times piece about Youth 180 as an example. There is also the Mayor's initiative to reduce youth violence (<http://www.seattle.gov/mayor/issues/youthInitiative/>)

## **What Can Parents Do? Recognizing and Preventing Gang Involvement**

(The following information is from a US Department of Justice reference card)

Parents should look for multiple signs to indicate possible gang involvement because some of these indicators alone, such as clothes or musical preferences, are also common among youth not involved in gangs.

Parents are encouraged to familiarize themselves with local gang symbols, seek help early, and consider contacting school personnel, local law enforcement, faith leaders, and community organizations for additional assistance.

### **Warning Signs That Your Child May Be Involved with a Gang**

- Admits to "hanging out" with kids in gangs
- Shows an unusual interest in one or two particular colors of clothing or a particular logo
- Has an unusual interest in gangster-influenced music, videos, movies, or websites
- Uses unusual hand signals to communicate with friends
- Has specific drawings or gang symbols on school books, clothes, walls, or tattoos
- Comes home with unexplained physical injuries (fighting-related bruises, injuries to hand/knuckles)
- Has unexplained cash or goods, such as clothing or jewelry
- Carries a weapon
- Has been in trouble with the police
- Exhibits negative changes in behavior such as:
  - Withdrawing from family
  - Declining school attendance, performance, behavior
  - Staying out late without reason
  - Displaying an unusual desire for secrecy
  - Exhibiting signs of drug use
  - Breaking rules consistently
  - Speaking in gang-style slang

### **What Parents Can Do to Prevent Gang Involvement**

- Spend quality time with your child
- Get involved in your child's school activities
- Be a positive role model and set the right example
- Know your child's friends and their families
- Encourage good study habits
- Teach your child how to cope with peer pressure
- Help your child develop good conflict/resolution skills (See [www.safeyouth.org/scripts/teens/conflict.asp](http://www.safeyouth.org/scripts/teens/conflict.asp))
- Encourage your child to participate in positive after-school activities with adult supervision (recreation centers, organized sports, youth groups)
- Take action in your neighborhood (create a neighborhood alliance, report and remove graffiti)
- Talk with your child about the dangers and consequences of gang involvement. Let your child know that you don't want to see him or her hurt or arrested. Explain to your child that he or she should NOT:
  - Associate with gang members
  - Attend parties or social events sponsored by gangs
  - Use hand signs, symbols, or language that is meaningful to gangs
  - Wear clothing, including specific colors, which may have meaning to gangs in your area

For more resource information, check the use the following websites:

[www.cops.usdoj.gov](http://www.cops.usdoj.gov), [www.fbi.gov](http://www.fbi.gov), [www.ojjdp.ncjrs.org](http://www.ojjdp.ncjrs.org)

Until next time, Take Care and Stay Safe!

Mark Solomon, South Precinct Crime Prevention Coordinator